

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held at Council Chamber, Sessions House on Tuesday, 1st March, 2022.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr A Brady, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Rich Lehmann, Mr S C Manion, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Reidy and Mr Q Roper

OTHER MEMBERS: Mrs S Chandler and Mrs S Prendergast

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

69. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mrs McArthur, Mr Beaney, Mr Cooke, and Mr Beart for whom Mr Rayner was present.

70. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

71. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held on 11 January 2022 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

72. Performance Monitoring
(Item 5)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence; Sarah Hammond, Director of Integrated Children's Services (Social Work); Mark Walker, Director of SEND and Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director of CYPE were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Atkinson introduced the report. It was highlighted that the indicators had largely remained the same. There had been pressure with rising caseloads in Children's Social Work Teams and this was now RAG-rated red. The Youth Justice re-offending rate had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The figures related to events in 2020 with lockdowns and court closures and the effects were likely to be more pronounced in the next quarter.

2) Further to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- KCC had been taking part in national data collection with the DFE to look at pressures on the SEN system, particularly around the issuing of EHCPs. Concerns were raised about district variations on timescales. It was noted that EHCPs were not the only way of getting specialist help for children.
- Children's Social Work caseloads were higher and this was due to staff sickness and slower throughput linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. An innovative recruitment programme was running for Children's Social Work. There had been little turnover but there were a large number of staff on maternity leave due to the cohort being younger and it had been challenging to recruit locum social workers.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

73. Risk Management: Children, Young People and Education
(Item 6)

Jody Catterall, Risk Manager; Sarah Hammond, Director of Integrated Children's Services (Social Work); Christine McInnes, Director of Education; Mark Walker, Director of SEND and Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director of CYPE were in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Catterall introduced the report.

2) Following questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- Safeguarding was fundamental part of KCC's business and runs through all the work done. Social work services had been stretched due to non-availability of KCC's partners during the Covid-19 pandemic. This meant that risk was not shared. There had been delays in court proceedings and children had not received visits from Health Visitors. Work had been done to re-engage with these services.
- Local authorities who were not previously taking part in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) had been directed to take part in the Scheme. The projected number of children for the year was expected to exceed the number of NTS placement allocations. The current quota levels would not be sufficient.
- Ofsted had started inspecting against a new framework which looked at SEND inclusion in schools.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

74. Post-16 Transport Policy
(Item 7)

Craig Chapman, Head of Fair Access and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1) Further to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- There was a consultation open regarding subsidised bus services and responses were encouraged.

- Transport support was available to young people with disabilities post-16, in a similar way to pre-16 pupils.

2) RESOLVED to agree the recommendations as detailed in the report.

75. Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) - Consultation outcome on service redesign and delivery options from April 2022

(Item 8)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People); Christine McInnes, Director of Education; and Mark Walker, Director of SEND were in attendance for this item.

1) The Chair introduced the report.

2) Mrs Chandler outlined the report. Further work had been undertaken and the report had been extended. Further feedback had been received from schools and Kent-wide disability organisations. There had also been a meeting with representatives of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS).

3) Mr Walker said that a meeting had been held with a group of schools and 25 head teachers, where feedback about the STLS was sought. Feedback was also received from schools in Dover. The feedback was that it was not as specialist or as responsive as it needed to be, which had not been fed back as part of the formal consultation process.

4) Further to comments and questions, it was noted:

- Specialist services were run from within KCC such as Educational Psychology and each service had appropriate levels of professional development and management oversight.
- There was to be a focus in improving outcomes for STLS.

5) It was noted that there was a drafting error in the recommendation and this was to be corrected.

6) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report subject to the above amendment.

76. Shared Accommodation and Young Persons Supported Accommodation and Floating Support Service Contracts

(Item 9)

Christy Holden (Head of Strategic Commissioning – Children’s) and Sarah Hammond, Director for Integrated Children’s Services were in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Holden outlined the report.

2) Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted:

- It was queried whether KCC could become an Ofsted registered provider. It was anticipated that Ofsted would bring forward outline indications regarding the regulatory framework by the spring, but the full regulations were not expected before the end of the year. It was not possible to plan without details regarding what the requirements would be. However, KCC was already operating in regulated arena for services such as fostering and adoption.
- The two services were structured differently, with the providers of Young Persons' Supported Accommodation and Floating Support already having accommodation, whereas the Shared Accommodation was using leased accommodation. Inflation was not included within the length of their contracts and there would need to be negotiation regarding an extension of contract.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

77. Kent Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education Annual Report 2020-2021

(Item 10)

1) Mr Manion outlined the report and thanked officers and Members involved with SACRE. Thanks were given to Mrs Prendergast for her input.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

78. SEND Update

(Item 11)

Mark Walker, Director of SEND was in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Walker introduced the update.

2) In response to questions from Members, the following points were noted:

- There had been a backlog from 2020 for the Educational Psychology service but the backlog had been cleared as a result of additional resources being put in place.
- There had been informal consultation with staff around the redesign of SEND services. Parents and Carers Together (PACT) had also participated and were actively involved in the redesign of SEND services.
- There had been an impact from the Covid-19 pandemic on pre-school/nursery applications for EHCPs where the main needs being identified were around speech, language and communication. Work was being done with early years settings to identify need at an early stage.

3) Members RESOLVED to note the update.

79. Complaints and Representations 2020-21

(Item 12)

Claire Thomson, Complaints Officer; Sarah Hammond, Director for Integrated Children's Services (Social Work) and Mark Walker, Director for SEND were in attendance for this item.

- 1) Ms Thomson introduced the report. It was noted that during the Covid-19 pandemic, it had been important for social care staff to protect the most vulnerable in the county and changes were made to make allowances. There had initially been a drop in the number of complaints at the beginning of the pandemic but the numbers had since risen.

More challenging complaints had been received but the number of complaints being upheld had remained stable.

- 2) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:
 - The number of complaints that had been upheld regarding SEND services was higher than in other areas such as Children's Social Care and other services in the directorate. There had been an impact from capacity issues and there had been issues around meeting timescales for these services. Lessons learned from complaints were being used to inform improvement to services. It was anticipated that there would be improvement in the numbers of upheld complaints relating to SEND in the future.
 - Complaints were dealt with in line with KCC's responsibilities around data protection and GDPR.

- 3) RESOLVED to note the report.

80. Proposed Revision of Rates Payable and Charges Levied For Children's Services in 2022-23
(Item 13)

Karen Stone, CYPE Finance Business Partner was in attendance for this item.

- 1) Ms Stone outlined the report.
- 2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:
 - Administration fees were not increased annually as this was a very minor part of the charging.

- 3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

81. 22/00021 - Rights, Representation & Advocacy
(Item 14)

Christy Holden, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services) was present for this item.

- 1) Ms Holden introduced the report.
- 2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations as outlined in the report.

82. Proposal to make prescribed changes to Foreland Fields (Foundation) Special School from September 2022
(Item 15)

Marisa White (Area Education Officer – East Kent) was in attendance for this item.

- 1) Ms White introduced the report and advised that a consultation had been undertaken which had resulted in 15 responses. 5 responses had been from staff, 3 from students and 7 from parents. A drop-in session was held and 4 parents attended, only 1 of which was a parent of a child at Foreland Fields.
- 2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

83. Proposal to permanently expand Borden Grammar School, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, ME10 4DB from 120 places to 150 places for September 2022
(Item 16)

Marisa White (Area Education Officer – East Kent) was in attendance for this item.

- 1) Ms White introduced the report and advised that this report had come to Cabinet Committee in 2021. This was being reported back as an additional £1.515 million had been sought. Delays in obtaining planning permission due to objections and queries had resulted in inflationary costs. There had also been costs such as further surveys and detailed plans.
- 2) Members asked questions and it was noted:
 - There had been learning points from the project as it had been a sensitive planning application.
- 3) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

84. Proposal to Expand Rosherville Church of England Academy and relocate to a new site
(Item 17)

Ian Watts (Area Education Officer – North Kent) was in attendance for this item.

- 1) Mr Watts introduced the report.
- 2) Members asked questions and it was noted:
 - There were a number of funding sources for the project, including around £5 million coming from developer contributions.
 - There had been discussions with the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, the developers and the developers of the adjoining housing site with regard to access to the site.
- 2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendation in the report.

85. Relocation of Milestone Nursery to the Cherry Orchard Academy site
(Item 18)

Ian Watts (Area Education Officer – North Kent) was in attendance for this item.

- 1) Mr Watts introduced the report.
- 2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendation in the report.

86. Refurbishment and reprovisioning of Science facilities at The Towers School and Sixth Form, Ashford
(Item 19)

Lee Round (Interim Area Education Officer – South Kent) was in attendance for this item.

- 1) Mr Round outlined the report.
- 2) RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

87. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 20)

1) Mrs Prendergast said that some SEN families had experienced difficulties over the last few weeks as a result of the regrettable delays in completing vital retendering work intended to create sufficient capacity in the transport system to get eligible pupils to school. Apologies were given for the impact this had and for the huge amount of uncertainty and anxiety that had been caused for many families and the children.

Alongside communications with families, work had been undertaken with Kent PACT – the forum for SEN parents – to address concerns raised by parents and carers and respond to the challenges presented. Thanks were given to them for their work on behalf of children and families.

KCC was committed to conducting a thorough and transparent review of what had led to the situation so that lessons could be learned and the experience of families could be improved in the future. Work had continued within the Client Transport Team to ensure that all pupils were provided with the transport to which they were entitled.

The matter was to be discussed at Cabinet and also at the Scrutiny Committee on 8 March where Mrs Prendergast, Mrs Chandler and Mr Brazier, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, will respond to questions put by Members of the Council.

It was National Offer day for secondary school places on 1 March. A total of 18,311 Kent parents/carers applied for a place for their child in a school for September 2022 - the highest number of Kent applications ever seen. 79.6% of Kent families were offered a place at their first preference school - an increase from 69.7% last year. While the results in the previous year were affected by the increased number

of preferences parents were offered due to COVID, results still exceeded the 77.7% achieved for 2020's intake. Overall 95.4% of families were offered a school of preference, maintaining the same level as last year in spite of the increase in applications.

This left a small proportion of families without a school of their preference - however, all pupils had been offered an alternative school. Unfortunately, fewer than 8% of these parents made full use of their preferences to name eligible schools, which significantly limited KCC's opportunity to offer them a school of their preference. Kent's process will continue to provide opportunities to secure alternatives before the start of the new school year. Parents were advised to read their offer letter, which explained how these ongoing processes work.

It was announced that this year, Kent had seen an increase in the number of disadvantaged children securing a Grammar assessment through the Kent Test. On National Offer Day, while the whole cohort figures for securing a grammar school places had seen a small reduction (42.6% compared to 42.8% for 2021 intake), 25.8% of tested FSM pupils secured a grammar school compared to 23.9% the previous year. Similarly, 26.4% of tested Pupil Premium children were offered a Grammar school compared to 25.1 last year. It was also confirmed that following further negotiation, all Kent Grammar schools have now agreed to include priority for Pupil Premium pupils in their oversubscription criteria.

Kent families who applied online will be sent an email from 4pm on 1 March, informing them of the school they had been offered. All other parents were to be sent a first class letter.

KCC staff members were ready to speak to parents and carers to answer any questions they had - as well as offer information, advice and support.

2) In response to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- Work was ongoing to resolve the SEN home to school transport issues.
- The news that Kent grammar schools were to prioritise children from deprived backgrounds was welcomed.

3) Mrs Chandler said that further to the commitment made to Members at a meeting of County Council, work was underway looking at how KCC could effectively engage with partners to identify young carers and how partners could help support KCC's work with young carers.

A report was to be brought to Cabinet Committee on 10 May, regarding how the national Family Hubs work was to be developed across KCC.

The Family Hub model was centred around three key principles: access, connectivity and relationships.

KCC was working with the Anna Freud Centre to consider how learning from the pandemic could help shape Kent's vision for improved outcomes for children, young people and parents across Kent and enhancement of their experience of a range of

services. Members were to have an opportunity at the Cabinet Committee on 10 May to respond to the paper and ask questions.

On Thursday, 24 February, Inspectors from the South East Regional Ofsted Team came to Kent to take part in the Annual Conversation. The meeting was with the senior Officers of Directorate, and was based on KCC's self-assessment for Children's Social Care. Although the Annual Conversation does not conclude with a judgement being made by Ofsted, a follow up letter would be sent to the Local Authority and the letter was to be shared with members of the Cabinet Committee.

The work being done by the KCC adolescent service in collaboration with the Violence Reduction Unit and the Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother Hospital on the Reachable Moments Pilot in Ramsgate, was highlighted. The aim of the pilot was to engage with the child and explore if they had been a victim of violence in the community or as a result of exploitation. Children were often too scared to tell Police or the authorities the real story of why they had sought medical attention but at that moment of vulnerability, within an A&E setting, children were perhaps more likely to respond to that 'reachable moment'. It was hoped that intervention would lead to improved engagement and outcomes for our most vulnerable children facing extra-familial harm in the community.

It was announced KCC was now part of a Care Leaver pilot project in Thanet, working with Moving Forward. Moving Forward was to work to support young people leaving care aged 18-25 (and those aged 16 or 17 who are at the transition stage), including former UASC, where work would be done to increase positive outcomes and provide support and assistance for these young people. Young people and Care Leavers were to be linked to voluntary and statutory services for support with issues such housing, employment, training/education, mental health issues, advocacy, and engagement with social activities, as well as given help to plan for the future, manage crisis and enjoy and pursue hobbies and new interests. KCC Care Leaver Navigators were to build on the support that already existed for Care leavers by working collaboratively with other services, always with the best interests and wishes of the young person, and by assisting them to navigate their way through all the services and pathways of support available to them.

Reconnect: Kent Children and Young People was working with Kent's newly formed Digital Kent team to tackle digital exclusion. This work ensured that there was an access pathway to enable both children and young people aged 4 to 18 (and those aged up to 25 with an EHCP), in or currently out of education, employment or training, to receive a digital device. There was a simple referral process for professionals to use to apply for a device for the family, together with a 4g router, if needed, and basic software to support learning. The device would be gifted to the family. The referral form could be accessed on the Digital Kent website.

The Spirit of Try Angle Awards ceremony was to take place on Sunday, 20 March at the Port Lympne Animal Reserve. The Try Angle Awards, which were in their 27th year, recognised and rewarded the outstanding efforts and achievements of young people and groups who really tried their best whether at school, work, college, in business or in their wider community across Kent. Mrs Chandler looked forward to seeing all young people who would be accepting their awards on the day.

4) In response to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:

- The issue of the music licences within youth centres had been brought to officers' attention.
- National organisations had decided to run their pilot projects in Thanet. The Care Leaver pilot had been funded by the Moving Forward Project by the National Lottery and the Reachable Moments was a Police and Crime Commissioner initiative working with health services.

88. Ofsted Update
(Item 21)

Katherine Atkinson, Assistant Director of Management Information and Intelligence was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Atkinson outlined the report.

89. Work Programme
(Item 22)

1) Members noted the work programme.